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CONSULTANTS SQUARED: In an odd twist to the City Hall consulting game, advisers to the New Orleans City Council have hired their own advisers.

Attorneys with the Washington, D.C., law firm of Sullivan & Worcester, one of the firms that advises the council's Utilities Committee, showed up at a recent meeting of the panel with a public relations firm in tow.

The law firm has a \$7.4 million contract for two years to advise the council on regulating utilities, primarily Entergy New Orleans.

Clint Vince, one of the firm's partners and the council's lead adviser, said that after two recent TV news stories — one of which he labeled “false” and the other “unfair” — he thought it was necessary to retain someone with expertise in media relations.

The stories called into question the advisers' costs and suggested that Vince had agreed to let Entergy double-bill customers for costs at the Grand Gulf nuclear plant. Vince strongly denied the allegation.

So Sullivan & Worcester hired Deveney Communication of New Orleans. That decision came on the advice of local lawyer Shaun Clarke, another consultant the Washington law firm hired after the negative media coverage.

The cost for both of those services will “absolutely not” be passed onto New Orleans rate-payers, Vince said, and will be “paid for out of our pocket.”

Vince said he hopes the need for Deveney Communication has passed, but that Sullivan & Worcester would use the firm on an as-needed basis.

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